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The function of the predicate in the fables of Krylov. A text-grammatical study

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5. Conclusion

It is only recently that investigators have started attempting to find out why a sizeable text such as a novella or a novel should be interpreted by the reader as a single whole and not as a set of unconnected sentences, paragraphs, and chapters—in other words, what makes a text be regarded as a coherent text.

Interest in this problem has found expression in the work of Barthes, Van Dijk, Kallmeyer, and many others. A separate branch of linguistics has even been developed for this purpose: text linguistics. The present investigation is intended as a contribution to a sub-category of text linguistics: text grammar.

Our starting-point in this investigation was the structural point of view: a grammatical phenomenon is not investigated in isolation, but in the context of other grammatical phenomena. In our investigation of the function of the predicate in the text we therefore first had to form a notion of the sentence and of how it functions as an utterance, and then of how the predicate functions within the sentence; next of the relation between a single sentence and a text of more than one sentence, and finally of how the predicate functions within such a text. Not until then had we obtained the conceptual apparatus required for analysing the fable, i.e. for investigating the function of the predicate in the macro-conditions of the fable.

As regards the functioning of the sentence as utterance we have based ourselves for an important part on the theory of Ross (1970) about the embedding of the sentence in a speaker-hearer situation. In our eyes therefore the sentence as utterance functions as a subclause in a declarative construction whose agent is the speaker. Such a construction may be repeated within the subclause. Jespersen has strikingly formulated the importance of speaker and hearer for grammar in his *Philosophy of Grammar*: ". . . the speaker and the hearer, and their relations to one another, should never be lost sight of if we want to understand the nature of language and of that part of language which is dealt with in grammar" (1975¹¹:17).

The declarative verb is responsible for a dichotomy of the mean-

ing of the declarative subclause into a referential and a modal component. The latter component also contains the so-called point of view. The modal component contains speaker-linked meaning, while the referential component contains meaning referring to extra-lingual reality. Two types of declarative verb, viz. verbs of saying and volitive verbs, correspond with two types of deep structure modality in the subclause: indicative and subjunctive.

For the function of the predicate, the diathesis proved to be the most important point-of-view category. Two deep structure voices are distinguished: active and non-active. Because the speaker brings one of the arguments (origin) to the foreground by means of the diathesis, it is necessary to predicate all the arguments in order to make the referential predicate structure manifest.

As regards the structure of the utterance, it has been assumed to consist of two 'strata': a stratum of meaning and one of form, labelled deep structure respectively surface structure. We here regard meaning to be the meaning dissociated from the form, while besides the form the surface structure also comprises the manner in which the meaning has been embodied in the form. Frequently, transformations are necessary to make the deep structure manifest. These are mainly synonymy transformations, with the aid of which we attempt to revise the surface structure in such a way that it approximates the deep structure as closely as possible.

Apart from the modal component, i.e. apart from mood and diathesis, among other things, the meaning of the sentence possesses a predicate-argument structure, of which the predicate forms the nucleus. The predicate in its turn consists of a nucleus, one or more roles, and one or more syntactic positions. We distinguish the following roles: agentive, causative, objective, dative (in three variants: possessive, experientive, declarative), and locative. The predicate determines the roles (= deep structure cases) for the arguments filling the syntactic positions. Besides all this, the predicate comprises a causal-temporal component containing the semantic time in which the process runs its course, as well as the causality present in the process. The temporal component is responsible for a

division into single-phase and three-phase predicates. A three-phase predicate consists of a presupposed initial phase, a transitional phase (the transition of a state to another state), a moment of transition, and a final phase. The idea that the predicate is divisible into phases is strongly supported by the work of Daneš (1968; 1971a; 1976).

The causal component of the predicate finds shape in the relation between the single-phase causing event and the single-phase or three-phase caused event. In dividing a predicate into a causing event and a caused event we agree with the views of Chodolovič (1969).

Not every cause achieves the effect to be expected from it, nor every causing event therefore its expected caused event. The failure to bring about the expected caused event, or the bringing about of another caused event than was to be expected from the causing event in question, is expressed in the predicate in the causative role. In order to account for this type of 'unintentional' causality, it is necessary to make a second causing event manifest, which we have called the effect-determining action. The effect-determining action is a predicate belonging to the effect-determining factor (EDF). Since this actant is generally of an impersonal kind, the concept 'impersonal causer' ('Nature') had to be introduced.

On the basis of the number of places, the number and nature of the roles, and the number of phases in the causal-temporal component, a typology of independent predicates was drawn up, containing 23 types.

As regards the relation of the text consisting of one simple sentence and the text consisting of more than one sentence, we base ourselves for a major part on the views of Van Dijk (1971; 1972). The simple sentence—whose meaning is labelled 'proposition'—forms the smallest complete utterance. Hence, anything stated about the simple sentence holds true, *mutatis mutandis*, for the text consisting of more than one sentence. Van Dijk remarks: "This structural analogy between sentence and text is suggested also by their possible co-extensiveness . . . a text can consist of only one sentence" (1972: 140). And Barthes argues: "Le plus raisonnable est de postuler un rapport homologique entre la phrase et le discours . . . le récit

est une grande phrase, comme toute phrase constative est, d'une certaine manière, l'ébauche d'un petit récit . . ." (1966:3-4).

But in texts of more than one sentence certain semantic mechanisms appear to clearer advantage than in texts consisting of a single sentence. This is particularly true for the mechanism of coherence. That a hearer (reader) should interpret a text as a single whole is, according to Van Dijk—and we agree—in the first place due to the implicit presence of a macro-structure. The macro-structure is the summary, in one or more propositions, of the contents of the individual sentences (= micro-structures) of a text. Coherence is the relation between a macro-constituent of a text and the corresponding constituents of the micro-structures. A constituent of a micro-structure is an element of the set of micro-constituents belonging to a certain macro-constituent. It is our view that a macro-constituent is actualized in a text as a semantic *gestalt*. A micro-constituent forms part of the *gestalt* because it partially or completely repeats the macro-constituent. The macro-constituent correlates the elements of the *gestalt* and supplies the presupposed elements that are lacking.

According to this view, the textual predicate consists of a macro-predicate with the corresponding *gestalt*-type sets of predicates from the micro-structures. These sets are of the nature of predicate chains. The textual causal-temporal component links and orders the elements of the macro-predicate and of the predicate chains from the micro-structures according to the principles of succession and simultaneity. In the predicate chains the predicates have been broken down in such a way that all participating actants are predicated, if necessary with the aid of sub-predicates. A similar textual predicate chain has also been described by Gleason Jr. (1968).

A special property of the declarative subclause turned out to play an important role in our investigation, viz. the compatibility of this subclause with a main clause of otherwise identical meaning with either the same or the opposite sign ('he wanted (told) her to come, and she came/but she did not come'). This property has been clearly demonstrated by Bech (1951). Due to the presence of the declarative predicate in general and the conative predicate in partic-

ular, alternative possibilities of development come into being in the textual predicate. Such alternative possibilities also occur in the model of the narrative sequence drawn up by Bremond (1973): *passage à l'acte* vs. *non-passage à l'acte*, *achèvement* vs. *inachèvement*. The unintentional causality mentioned before is very closely linked with the above-mentioned property of the declarative subclause: 'he tried to bring about caused event *a*, but he brought about caused event *b*,' in which '*b*' implies 'not *a*.' In that case the macro-structure in question as well as the predicate occurring in it are of a compound nature.

In principle, the model of the textual predicate developed above may be applied to any text. We have applied it to the fables of Krylov. This application exclusively concerned the testing of a model of a sentence constituent, viz. the predicate, in macro-conditions. Other aspects of Krylov's fables, such as typically literary facets (metre, rhyme, etc.), biographical facets, the allegorical relation between the fables and historical reality, etc., have therefore not been investigated. Whatever we have stated about the fable refers to Krylov's fable. This is not to say that it may not, at least partly, hold good for other fables as well, but such has not been investigated by us.

The fable is a didactic genre and very suitable for text-grammatical analysis because of its simple narrative structure. Moreover, its stereotyped characters allow us to concentrate on the action, on the predicate of the fable. Of course the simplicity of the texts also has its drawbacks: because the lexical material is limited, there is little opportunity for repetition of the macro-constituents, and hence the mechanism of coherence is hardly developed.

The principal components of the fable are the fable action and a generalization of that action. Without this generalization (moral), the fable would not be a lesson, but merely a story. In many cases the generalization of the fable action is explicitly present in the fable (morality). According to Potebnja (1894), generalization of the fable action has become necessary because the real life situations allegorically summarized in the fable were no longer known to

the later reader. Even though the morality sometimes diverges from the (implicit) moral, yet it is an important means of verifying the macro-structure of the fable.

In Krylov's fable, a negative hero plays the most important role. The negative nature of this character lies first of all in his incorrect behaviour with regard to a general truth. If we indicate this general truth by 'if a, then b,' the negative hero's behaviour is 'opposite b.' Secondly, the hero's action is negative for another reason as well. In some way or other the hero suffers a failure: he attempts something, but this fails, or ends with another result than the one desired; or he assumes or asserts something, but this turns out to be untrue. If we indicate the situation desired or assumed by 'c,' the result is 'opposite c.' It follows from the above that Bech's test is twice applicable to the structure of the fable action.

In some fables a positive hero appears side by side with the negative one, a hero whose behaviour is correct with respect to the general truth and so corresponds with 'b.' The positive hero's action is crowned with success, and the result corresponds with what he desired or assumed, i.e. with 'c.'

According to Nøjgaard, who wrote a study about the ancient fable (1964; 1967), the hero, in that fable negative as well, is faced with a situation of conflict. The hero makes the wrong choice and is therefore called *le plus faible* by Nøjgaard. That the choice was wrong is shown by the adverse result of the chosen action; this result he terms *évaluation*. The evaluation has the form of an action or a statement.

Nøjgaard's ideas are also applicable to the fables of Krylov. Comparing the phases Nøjgaard distinguishes in the fable action with our description in terms of 'if a, then b,' the situation of conflict corresponds with 'if a,' the chosen action with 'opposite b'—of course this applies to the negative hero—and the evaluation with 'opposite c.' The evaluative action often corresponds with our effect-determining action, while in that case the evaluator (Nøjgaard's *le plus fort*) corresponds with our effect-determining factor. Nøjgaard's sequence shows great agreement with Bremond's sequence

(see above), but the two types of sequence stand in the relation of 'token' and 'type': Nøjgaard's sequence has been applied to the fable action, while Bremond's sequence still has to be so applied, still disposes of all its possibilities.

The choice the hero is faced with shows parallelism with the choice the reader, that is, the average human being, is faced with in life. Hence in most fables an exhortation to the reader has been added not to act like the negative hero (or to act like the positive hero) and to take into account the general truth underlying the fable.

In many fables there is a character that is, like the narrator himself, aware of the general truth of the fable and brings out this general truth. We therefore label this character 'narrator's helper.'

The fable is a coherent text and as such forms part of a declarative construction. By means of an implicit declarative predicate (performative), the fable text is linked with an implicit narrator and an implicit reader. Generally speaking the fable text consists of two coordinately situated declarative fields, of which the one contains the fable action and the other the morality and perhaps the exhortation to the reader. Within the fable action there occur one or more subordinately situated declarative fields, linked to an actant by means of a declarative predicate. One of these declarative constructions is of central importance to the fable, viz. the one linked with the hero in the chosen action ('tries,' 'wants,' 'says,' etc.). Usually therefore, this action of the hero's is preceded by a conative or other declarative predicate. In creating his negative heroes, the fabulist has made use of the possibility of having the subclause of this declarative predicate followed by a main clause of otherwise identical meaning, but with *opposite* sign ('the hero tries to vanquish the monster, but he does not vanquish it'; 'the hero thinks he is strong, but he is not strong'). These examples are at the same time examples of macro-structures.

In making the predicate of the fable manifest, the following method was used: 1. establishing the surface structure predicate

chains; 2. establishing the deep structure predicate chains; 3. summarizing the deep structure chains; 4. establishing the type of macro-predicate; 5. establishing the nature of the causal-temporal relation within the macro-predicate in the generally compound macro-structure; 6. comparing the macro-predicate with the predicate in the morality.

In almost all the fables the hero's action is embedded in a declarative construction: 'Alcides *tries* to crush the monster Discord,' 'the Horse *thinks* that the Peasant is wasting the oats,' etc. Fables like *Obez'jany* (The Monkeys) and *Dva Bočki* (Two Barrels) form exceptions to this rule. By means of this embedding, the fabulist creates his negative heroes and their unfavourable fate (a consequence of unintentional causality) or their being wrong. Hence the macro-structure in almost all the fables is compound. The parts of the macro-predicate occurring in it almost always realize the chosen action and the evaluation (effect-determining action). Sometimes the whole is preceded by the less important situation of conflict.

The relation between the parts of the macro-predicate, and between the chosen action and the evaluation in particular, is either non-causal (type A) or causal (type B). This marks the difference between fables like *Volk i Jaghenok* (type A) and *Alkid* (type B). In *Alkid* ('Alcides tries to crush the monster Discord; he does not succeed, but instead makes the monster grow bigger') the hero is the unintentional cause of the evaluation: the growth of Discord; of course together with the effect-determining factor, in this case 'Nature.' In *Volk i Jaghenok* ('the Wolf kills the Lamb, although the Lamb shows that he is innocent') the Lamb is not the cause of his fate by means of his arguments, but he *is* the negative hero, because he should have known that arguing with a stronger person is useless.

The picture of causality that Krylov paints in his fables is typical of his philosophy of common sense and rationalism. One example of this is the fable *Dub i Trost'* (The Oak and the Reed): 'An Oak boasts that it is very strong, but it is felled by a storm.' In this fable there is no trace of an indication that there is a causal relation between the boasting and the being felled; such would have

been contrary to Krylov's rationalism.

Some of the fables have a structure allowing several interpretations of the causality, because the effect-determining action too may be followed by its opposite. An example of this is the interpretation of the fable *Strekoza i Muravej* (The Dragonfly and the Ant): 'A Dragonfly dances all summer long and thus has no food in the winter. So he turns for food to an Ant, but the latter refuses, because the Dragonfly has been dancing all summer.' This ancient fable—it occurs as early as with Aesop—contains the usual macro-structure: 'a Dragonfly tries to obtain food from an Ant, but does not get it.' The Dragonfly is the negative hero and the Ant the evaluator. Yet the fabulist has not only placed the Dragonfly in a situation of conflict (he is hungry), but also the Ant (the choice between giving and not giving). In this way the fabulist has created within a single fable the possibility of a second negative hero. Hence it has been repeatedly debated in Russia which of the two actually is the negative hero, and this debate will probably go on. The experiences of Vodovozov and Kuprin as regards what Russians feel about *Strekoza i Muravej* are well-known (cf. Aleksandrova 1970: 92-94). In 1862 Vodovozov recounted how children condemned the Ant, while in 1909 Kuprin was indignant because children 'cruelly made the Dragonfly out to be in the wrong': ". . . *kak budto by ustami ètiè soplivyx mal'čiček i devčonok nam proiznesli samyj tjaželyj, bespovorotnyj smertnyj prigovor*" (" . . . as if through the mouths of these brats the severest and most irrevocable death sentence was pronounced").

Chernicer (1745-1784) gave a turn to the fable in which the Ant, moved by pity, offered bread to the Dragonfly:

No èto tol'ko v poučen'e
Ej Muravej skazal,
A sam na prokormlen'e
Iz žalosti ej xleba dal.

But we do not doubt that Krylov saw the Dragonfly as the negative hero: 'If you are foolish enough not to work, you need not turn to someone else for food.' Any other interpretation would be contrary to the structure and tendency of Krylov's other fables. The Ant fulfils its evaluative function in two ways: 1. by refusing to give food: 2. by its words, which demonstrate that it also functions as 'narrator's helper,' for like the narrator it knows the law of Nature: "*Ty vse pela? Èto delo: Tak podi že, popljaši!*" ("Did you sing and dance all the time? Very well, just go on doing so!").

We shall now summarize the results of our investigation. The investigation demonstrated that there is a parallelism between the deep structure of the sentence category—i.e. the predicate—in the conditions of the simple sentence and in macro-conditions, that is to say, in the text consisting of more than one of such sentences. Because the predicate is regarded as the nucleus of the sentence, this result contributes to the establishing of a parallelism of the entire semantic structures of the utterance consisting of a single sentence and that consisting of more than one sentence.

In demonstrating the above-mentioned parallelism, the hypothesis regarding textual coherence, viz. that this coherence is based on complete or partial repetition of the macro-constituents by the corresponding micro-constituents (constituents of the individual sentences of the text), was applied with positive results. In this process the simplicity of the fable texts was an advantage, because it allowed relation of virtually the whole of the textual material to the macro-structure—but it did not allow of testing *gestalt* formation on a larger scale.

In the 198 fables investigated, all the predicates included in the typology could be found back in macro-form except one (nr. 21). The absence of this type is probably coincidental, for it is not difficult to imagine a fable action in which the hero makes a slip of the tongue: e.g. 'x unintentionally says y.'

It has been seen that the investigation of grammatical categories in macro-conditions may yield more insight into those categories. Examples are the becoming manifest of 1. the effect-determining factor

and the effect-determining action; 2. a part of the concessive construction.

Re 1: in a sentence of the type *John (unintentionally) knocked over the lamp* the deep structure of the predicate is much more extensive than would appear from the surface structure. The deep structure of the sentence is 'John tried (causing event) to achieve something (desired caused event), but instead of his achieving what he desired, he (unintentionally) brought about the falling over of the lamp (caused event).' Yet the falling over of the lamp was not only the effect of John's action, but also the effect of gravity (effect-determining action), caused by 'Nature' (effect-determining factor). 'Nature'—also called 'C_n' and 'the impersonal agent' in the investigation—is another category standing out in macro-conditions. The compound type of predicate described here is the deep structure predicate of most of the fables.

Re 2: the deep structure of the concessive construction too is far more extensive than would appear from the surface structure. The sentence *Although the weather was bad, they still went out* has a deep structure: 'if the weather is bad, one does not go out (general truth); when the weather was bad, one would have expected them not to go out, yet they did go out.' In the fable—at least if side by side with the negative hero and his action there is a positive hero and his action—the entire concessive construction is explicitly present. The first part, the general truth, is realized by the positive hero and his action, the second part ('although the weather was bad, they still went out') by the negative hero and his action. An example of this is the fable *Oboz* (The train of carts). The general truth underlying this fable is: 'if one has to carry a load down a mountain, one does so slowly.' This general truth is realized by the positive hero, the good Horse: when he carried the load down, he did so slowly. The young Horse acted contrary to this expectation, however, and realized the only part of the concessive construction that is usually explicit in the sentence: 'although he was carrying a load down, he did not do so slowly.'

It is the task of text linguistics to make the linguistic and the

literary models of the analysis of literary texts approach each other more closely. May this investigation have contributed to the performance of that task.